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ABSTRACT

A project in a second and third grade classroom resulted in a classroom newsletter designed and written by regular and special education students to provide the school and parents with information regarding activities in their classroom and school. Students were provided with an authentic opportunity to express their ideas and feelings about school and life, using a process approach to writing. Key components in the writing processes students use to write the newsletter are brainstorming, writing the first draft, peer revising, revising and editing conference, and publishing. The project is flexible enough to meet the needs of teachers, whatever the educational level. A two-hour period was sufficient for the second and third graders in the original project. The cost of the project depends on the computer equipment, software, and paper supplies available. (RS)

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Classroom Newsletter

"A view of what's happening in the classroom through the eyes of the children."

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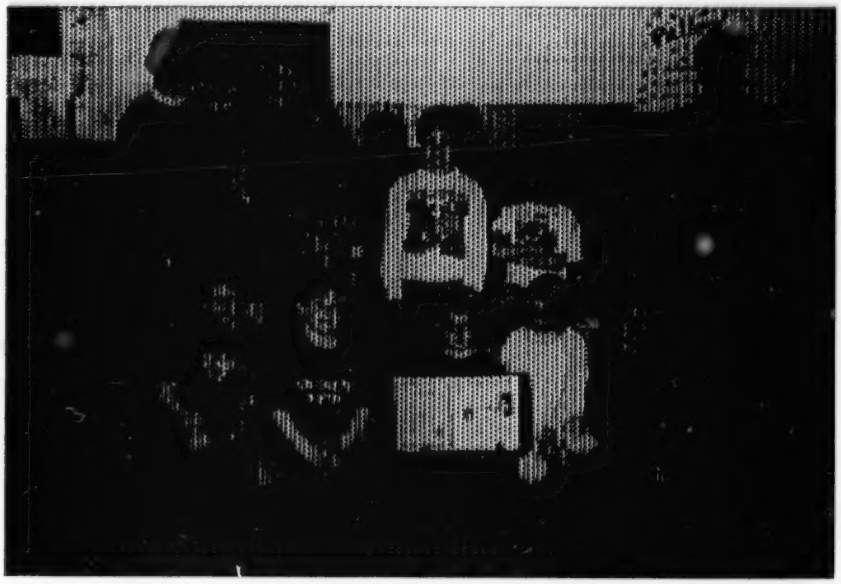

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Classroom Newsletter

Students are provided with an authentic opportunity to express their ideas and feelings about school and life through a classroom newsletter.

General Description

A classroom newsletter designed and written by regular and special education students to provide the school and parents information regarding current and past activities in their classroom and school.

Participants

This project was incorporated into a 2nd and 3rd grade classroom, but could be successful for any grades. The key to a successful newsletter is in providing the students the time and opportuntity to write about real things happening around them.

According to their availability, other participants included aids, parents, and special education teachers. The program is not dependent on these participants, however, its success and benefits can be greatly increased with their involvement. The key is to start a pattern and keep it consistent.

Program Goals

This project has three major goals:

1. To provide the students with an authentic and meaningful writing experience.

2. To model for the students each step of the writing process which includes forming intentions, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

3. To provide the parents and school personnel information regarding current and past activities in their students classroom and school.

Outcomes

1. Through this activity the students will write, using the writing process, one article for the newsletter each week. As the year progresses the student's articles will increase in length and provide more details.

2. This project will be used to inform parents, teachers, and other school personnel about classroom activities.

Procedures and Instruction

The classroom newsletter can be adapted to meet the needs of any teacher and their classroom. Some key components are provided with a brief description below.

1. **Brainstorm**: This is a fifteen minute activity and can be completely administered by a student. The students in my class were assigned on a rotating basis. The student selected, known as the leader, would begin by asking if any student could think of any activities that happened this past week or any planned for the upcoming week they felt their newsletter readers would be interested in. The teacher records all ideas on chart paper. Once the ideas were exhausted the leader then draws names and the students select a topic to write about. Students were allowed to pair up and co- author an article. Once the children have selected their topic they get to work writing their first draft.

2. **The First Draft**: The children write their first drafts and the teacher and other volunteers help the children form their ideas. The children are allowed to discuss any activities with other children or teachers. For example, if a child is writing to inform the readers about an up coming field trip, he/she may go to the office to speak with the secretary to collect the information necessary to complete the article.

3. **Peer Revising**: As the children finish they read their first draft to a peer and receives at least one question about their article for which they can add more information. The student then revises the first draft.

4. **Revising and Editing Conference**: When the children have completed their first draft and added one revision, they gather at the conference table. The children check their spelling and edit their piece for gramaticle errors. Then they take turns reading their article as the other children listen and respond by answering two questions. Does this article make sense and is their any important information left out? The students are allowed to add or delete information as needed. This completes their second revision.

5. **Publishing**: The children turn in their first drafts that have been revised twice and the teacher or a parent volunteer would type them into the newsletter format. Later in the year children who were able to type could choose to during free choice time.

Time

The following schedule worked well for my classroom. The project is flexible enough to meet the needs of the adapting teacher.

Friday Schedule	
10:30 -10:45am	Newsletter Brainstorm
10:45 - 11:30am	Drafting
11:30 - 11:45am	Peer Conferences
11:45am - 12:25pm	Editing and Revising Conference

Materials

- Computer and Work Station
- PageMaker or Comparable Computer Software
- Paper and Copier Costs

Note: The cost of the project depends on the computer equipment and software available. I was very lucky to have a Macintosh LC III, Laser Printer, and PageMaker. Teachers could use less expensive software and computer equipment.

Reference Resources

- Dancing With the Pen (Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.)
- after The End by Barry Lane (Heinemann)

Conclusion

The unique quality of this project is that the students are writing for a purpose and a targeted audience. They are able to write about important things that happen to them in their everyday life.

I have witnessed reluctant writers spend an hour working on a piece of writing excited because they met the publishing deadline. For some of my students, as well as parents, the classroom newsletter was their highlight of the week.